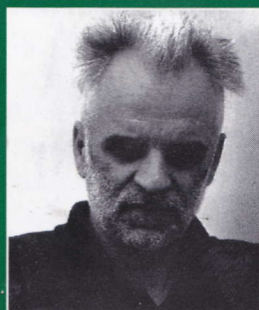


OPERA
IRELAND

NEWS

AUTUMN/WINTER 1998

BIRD MAN TO TAKE ON BAT AND BALL



He's done well with a couple of birds, so he should be able to handle a bat and a ball. That's Kurt Palm, the distinguished Austrian director whose first feature film, an adaptation of Flan O'Brien's *At Swim Two Birds*, has been mopping up

accolades at all the major festivals, including the Dublin Film Festival earlier this year.

Now he is going to direct Opera Ireland's *Die Fledermaus*, which goes on at Dublin's Gaiety Theatre in November. And the hedonistic ambience of Johann Strauss's frothy operetta will surely be relished by a man whose theatre credits include the likes of Alan Bennett's *Kafka's Dick*, Gustave Flaubert's *Le sexe faible* and Wolfgang Bauer's *Tadpoletigermosquitos at Mulligan's*.

Born in Upper Austria in 1955, Kurt Palm has been working as a director in theatre and on television in Austria for almost sixteen years. He directed Grilparzer and Futscher's *The Wild Hunter at the Vienna Festival* and has done an evening of Bertolt Brecht's erotic songs and poems in New York. In New York, too, he directed the Bauer double-bill that pairs *Magic Afternoon* with the ..at Mulligan's play mentioned above. And he has also directed festivals devoted to the works of musicians and writers as diverse as Mozart, Webern, Stifter and Joyce.

The Arts Council

An Chomhairle Ealaíon



AN OPERA COMPANY FOR ALL IRELAND

The exciting prospect of a merger between Opera Ireland and Opera Northern Ireland has become a strong possibility following a report issued by the Arts Council of Northern Ireland on 21 August. The recommendation comes in a 16-page report submitted by the Opera Review Group, a five-person body set up by the ACNI to "make recommendations for the future provision and development of the art form in Northern Ireland".

Sadly, the group's findings have resulted in the probable demise of Opera Northern Ireland, whose Arts Council funding will cease at the end of September. ONI's outreach educational programme is the only element of the company's activities to have been spared.

The idea of a single company providing full-scale opera for the whole country is also being looked at by the Irish Arts Council in Dublin, which is expected to endorse the proposed merger and at the same time to push for the purchase by the State of the Gaiety Theatre with a view to developing it as a permanent home for opera.

Commenting on the situation, Opera Ireland's General Manager David Collopy said: "Opera Ireland regards such a merger as a major step forward in the provision of opera on the island. It would yield the scale of economies which would allow mainstream opera to develop beyond its current position in both parts of the country. This company will be pleased to engage in any discussions which will help bring about the creation of such an entity."



P R E S E N T S

DIE FLEDERMAUS

by Johann Strauss II
Sung in German with English surtitles
With: Janis Kelly, Louise Walsh, Joyce Campana, Richard Brunner, Michael Kristenson, James Nelson, John Hancock, Gerard O'Connor.
Conductor: David Heusel
Director: Kurt Palm
Designers: Ursula Hübner (sets), Renato Uz (costumes)
Nov 20, 22, 24, 26 & 28 at 7.30 pm.

CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA

by Pietro Mascagni
With: Sylvie Brunet, Joyce Campana, Deirdre Cooling Nolan, Ivan Choupenitch, Anatoly Lochak.
and

PAGLIACCI

by Ruggero Leoncavallo
With Daniella Lojarro, Patrick Power, Declan Kelly, Jonathan Viera, Martin Higgins.
Conductor: Alexander Anissimov
Director: Dieter Kaegi
Designer: Bruno Schwengl.
Both operas sung in Italian with English surtitles
Nov 21, 23, 25, 27 & 29 at 7.30 pm

Opera Ireland Chorus
RTÉ Concert Orchestra
GAIETY THEATRE, DUBLIN
Opera Ireland Booking Office:
(01) 453 5519

THE Quintessential VIENNESE OPERETTA

Viennese operetta is generally considered to be the quintessential form of the genre. And the quintessential composer of Viennese operetta is undoubtedly Johann Strauss. But while it is true that Strauss was the shining light in what is known as the "Golden Age of Viennese Operetta" – that is, the period from about 1860 to the end of the 19th century – the whole thing originally came about through the activities of two non-Viennese musicians, Jacques Offenbach and Franz von Suppé

Offenbach's zany opéra-bouffes took Vienna by storm during the late 1880s, something they were also doing in places as far apart London, Madrid and New York. The sheer vitality and vicious satire of these light musical offerings totally captivated audiences who were more used to less sophisticated fare, mainly musical plays full of sentimentality and general *gemütlichkeit*, – a word best translated, I suppose, as genial goodnaturedness.

The first Vienna-based composer to take on Offenbach at his own game was Franz von Suppé, a prolific composer of theatre music who between 1841 and 1895 produced over 200 scores for plays, vaudevilles and what are now deemed to be the first true Viennese operettas. So, just as French opérette was developed by

the German Offenbach, so Viennese operetta was created by the polyglot Franz von Suppé, son of an Austrian mother and an Italian father of Belgian descent, born in Spalato, near Sarajevo, and reared in Italy.

Suppé's reaction to the flood of Offenbach one-acters was to compose his own one-act operetta *Das Pensionat* (*The Finishing School* – 1860), which may be regarded as the very first Viennese operetta. His next big success, and probably the best known of his early operettas, was the one-act *Die schöne Galathée* (Berlin 1865), neither the first nor the last musical to be based on the Pygmalion legend. Suppé's success encouraged several of his compatriots, including Karl Millöcker, to try their hand at writing operettas. But no matter how successful these local composer' operettas were – and some of them were very successful in their day – the influence of Offenbach continued to spread. And as his popularity grew, so too did his fees. What was needed was a local composer with a big enough reputation to challenge the supremacy of the Parisian dictator. And as far as the directors of Vienna's theatres were concerned there was only one composer of sufficient stature, and international stature at that, to take on the job. And that was Johann Strauss.

Johann Strauss was the elder of three musical brothers, all sons of the Johann Strauss who, along with his partner Josef Lanner, had been the joint creator of the Viennese concert waltz earlier in the century. By the mid-1880s, Johann was the undisputed king of the dance, renowned as the prolific purveyor of musical fodder for the world's ballrooms. With all of his energies directed towards pursuing this lucrative activity, it took a lot of persuasion, mainly from his wife Jetty and the powerful impresario Maximilian Steiner, before he agreed to try his hand at writing for the theatre. It's even said that Offenbach himself encouraged Strauss to do so. However it came about, Strauss did agree, and his first effort, *Indigo and the Forty*



Louise Walsh – Adele



Janis Kelly
Roselinde

Thieves, based on the Ali Baba story from The Arabian Nights, had its premiere at the Theater-an-der-Wien on 10 February 1871.

Like most of the fifteen or so operettas that followed, Indigo suffered from Strauss's chronic lack of judgement in the selection of librettos. It was a problem that was to dog him for most of his career. There were, however, two notable exceptions: *Der Zigeunerbaron* (*The Gypsy Baron*, 1875) and, before that, *Die Fledermaus* (*The Bat*), which came out at the Theater an der Wien on April 5, 1874

Although usually regarded as the archetypal Viennese operetta, *Die Fledermaus* is actually atypical in



John Hancock
Dr. Falke (*The Bat*)

many ways. Of course it has all the waltzes and polkas and big musical ensembles you expect in any piece emanating from the banks of the Danube. But you won't find much sentimentality in it, and the normal goody-goody types are replaced in Haffner and Genée's libretto by a gloriously amoral bunch of characters whose chief priority in life is having a whopping good time. And if having a good time involves its share of infidelities as well as lots of dressing-up, disguises and mistaken identities, who cares as long as the champagne continues to flow? Which it does, unceasingly, at the lavish second act party scene where the guests of the immensely rich and thoroughly bored Prince Orlofsky are encouraged to take their pleasures as they choose.

And take their pleasures they do. But there is a price to pay, because all of the ingeniously compromising situations that go to make up the tangled plot of this fizzing operetta have been woven by one Dr Falke. He is the unfortunate dignitary who, on the morning after a particularly boozy night before, was forced to run the gauntlet of giggling neighbours wearing little more than a bat costume. But his revenge is nigh, and it is taken to the accompaniment of the effervescent score written by great 'Waltz King' at the zenith of his creative powers.

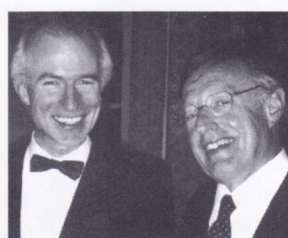
PHILIPPE TAKES THE WIDOW BACK TO VIENNA

Philippe Jordan, the young Swiss-Irish conductor whose *Merry Widow* for Opera Ireland last November won many plaudits, will be conducting the Lehár operetta at the Vienna State Opera next year. Immediately after his Dublin success, Philippe was invited by Daniel Barenboim to join him at the Staatsoper in Berlin and he has also been guesting at various houses around Europe. He conducted Mozart's *Così fan tutte* in Geneva and Donizetti's *Don Pasquale* at the Theatre Royal de Monnaie in Brussels. He returns to Brussels in December for Rossini's *Il turco in Italia*.



LADIES BOW OUT

The Opera Ireland Ladies' Committee has wound-up its activities after 30 years of enthusiastic and imaginative fund-raising on behalf of the company. The funding work will now be undertaken by a newly formed task force led by board member Adrian Burke. The Committee's last function, which raised £9,000, featured a recital by star pianist Hugh



Tinney and a talk on Irish silver and painting by Brian Coyle of Adams Auctioneers.

Hugh Tinney and Brian Coyle, who participated in the Opera Ireland Ladies' Committee's last function.

SURTITLES FOR ALL

Reaction to Opera Ireland's introduction of surtitles in 1996 was overwhelmingly favourable. Gone forever was that annoying rustling of programme pages and those irritating torches and flickering lighters. All you had to do was look up and there it was – a snappy English translation of what was

being sung giving an instant insight into what was happening on stage. Unless, of course, you were unlucky enough to be sitting in one of those seats from which the titles were hidden by overhanging balconies.

Happily, all that has changed. Thanks to a generous grant from the Arts

Council, additional screens have now been introduced on either side of the Parterre and these will also be clearly readable in the hitherto 'blind' seats at the back of the Dress Circle. So, from this Winter season onwards, patrons in every part of the Gaiety will be able to enjoy a good read while attending the opera.

OPERA LOVER TO THE RESCUE IN HIGH-TECH DILEMMA

Matt Farrelly is a man who loves opera. Indeed, he is a self-confessed opera fanatic who never misses an opportunity to catch a performance wherever his busy business life takes him. What is more important right now, though, is that he is playing a major role in solving a technological dilemma at Opera Ireland.

The opera company is in the process of installing its own Internet web site and e-mail facility. But the existing computer network is not equipped to deal with the new technology, let alone the looming 'year 2000' problem. And then there is also the imminent changeover to Euro currency.

Aisling Technology Ltd, where Matt Farrelly is Joint Managing Director,

specialise in creating dedicated software for the financial services sector. And Aisling are not only neighbours of Opera Ireland in John Player House, they have been major sponsors for the last nine years. In that time, they have supplied all the Company's computer needs, including hardware, software and maintenance. "Given our long-time support of Opera Ireland", Matt Farrelly says, "it is logical that Aisling Technology move to solve the Company's current IT problems at this time.

"We will be installing a network of seven Pentium processors with e-mail and i-mail as well as providing internet access and the latest business software and data base handling. In addition, we will be preparing Opera Ireland for the transition to the new Euro which will mean the Company can start trading in the new currency from day one."

Mr Farrelly believes that it is essential for Corporate Ireland to "give back or re-invest in the community. And Aisling has always favoured the arts

in this area. "We are a small organisation" he says, "but we are delighted to be able to support the development of opera in this way".

David Collopy, Opera Ireland's General Manager, believes the complete re-fit of the Company's information technology systems will offer international marketing opportunities and access to a world-wide opera data base. "Aisling Technology's sponsorship is of enormous benefit. It affords Opera Ireland access to the latest IT developments without diverting scarce cash resources away from our main seasons of opera."



Aisling Men: Paul Buckley, Technical Support Manager and Matt Farrelly, Joint MD.

THE Heavenly Twins ARE BACK IN TOWN

Cavalleria rusticana and *Pagliacci* are coming back to the Gaiety after an absence of fifteen years. Often referred to as simply 'Cav and Pag', these two short operas have been paired in performance so often that they are sometimes known as 'the Heavenly twins'. Mind you, with so much lust and blood-letting afoot in both operas, I'm not so sure that Heaven would be happy to be associated with either. But then, that's the nature of verismo.

Pietro Mascagni started the fashion for *verismo* (realism) when his *Cavalleria rusticana* (*Rustic Chivalry*) was an overnight success in Rome in May 1890. Based on Giovanni Verga's short story of the same name, the opera is all about lust and vengeance in the claustrophobic and superstitious milieu of a rural Sicilian community. And into this lurid plot, Mascagni pours a wealth of luscious melody. The short fairly bristles with tunes that have acquired popularity way beyond the opera house. Anyone who watches television commercials will be familiar with the famous Intermezzo, which in the opera comes as an oasis of calm in the midst of general

mayhem. The Easter Hymn, with Santuzza soaring above a chorus of praying villagers, is one of the four big opportunities given to the leading lady. The others are aria "Voi lo sapete" and two torrid duets, one each with the tenor and the baritone. The tenor, something of a village stud who is first heard serenading someone else's wife during the prelude, also leads a jolly drinking chorus, indulges in some un-friendly ear-biting with his ladyfriend's husband, and pours out an impassioned farewell to his Mama before setting out for a final confrontation with said husband.



Anatoly Lochak
Alfio in *Cavalleria Rusticana*

Like its slightly older 'twin', Ruggero Leoncavallo's *Pagliacci* (*Clowns*) too is a striking example of what *verismo* opera is all about. The composer wrote his own libretto, basing the plot on a lurid murder case tried by his judge father. But, while there is as much passion running loose in *Pagliacci* as there is in *Cavalleria Rusticana*, Leoncavallo harnesses



Daniella Lojarro
Nedda in *Pagliacci*

the energies into a more subtly shaded score. This is particularly noticeable in his writing for the comic scenes in the Act 2 play-within-a-play.

Nevertheless, *Pagliacci* is as replete with show-stopping musical climaxes as the Mascagni work. Canio, the central tenor character, has three notable arias: his foreboding "Un tal gioco" near the beginning is balanced by the climactic "No, Pagliaccio non son" at the denouement; in between he gets to close Act 1 with the heart-breaking "Vesti la giubba". The baritone Tonio has his famous Prologue and two unsuccessful seduction scenes with Canio's wife Nedda; a mock one as part of the comic antics, and one in deadly earnest. She, for her part, gets to sing her love-lonely ballatella and a long sensuous duet with her clandestine baritone lover. Even the comprimario tenor gets his moment with a delightful harlequinade serenade.



Patrick Power
Canio in *Pagliacci*



Alexander Anissimov – Conductor

FILLING UP FOR THE OPERA

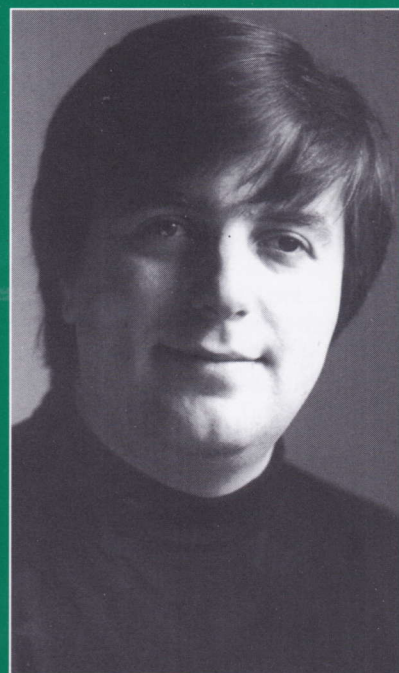
Early eaters will be glad to know that those delightful pre-opera suppers will be available at the Merrion Hotel (opposite the Dáil in Merrion St) again this coming Winter season. Due to popular demand, the hotel's Mornington Restaurant is again joining forces with Opera Ireland to



offer ticket-holders one of Chef Ed Cooney's superb two-course meals with coffee for just £12. But be warned! These suppers were so popular last time around that potential diners are strongly advised to make reservations well in advance of the evening. The number to call is (01) 603 0600.

And for those out-of-towners who want to stay on in Dublin after the performance, and stay in a Grade 1 listed Georgian townhouse into the bargain, the Merrion Hotel has a special rate of £75 per person sharing. For this you get to sleep in one of the award-winning, air-conditioned bedrooms, complete with all mod cons and communication technology, as well as a full Irish breakfast. For room reservations, call Reservations Manager Caroline Woods on (01) 603 0600.

These offers apply only during Opera Ireland's Winter Season: November 20-29, 1998



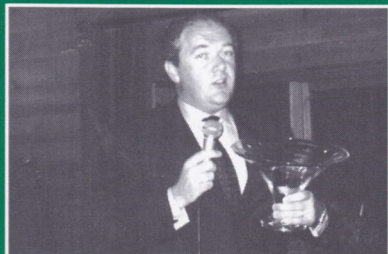
Fergus Sheil, who has been Opera Ireland's Chorus Master/Head of Music for the past two years, was recently appointed Chorus Master of Scottish Opera

SWINGING FOR THE OPERA



The Irish Times team which took part in the Opera Ireland Golf Classic: (r to l) Liam Holland, Alan Swan, Gary Brown and Stephen Ryan.

A hundred and twelve opera-loving golfers took to the tees at Luttrellstown Castle for the Opera Ireland Golf Classic on 30th June 1998. The event, organised by Frank O'Rourke and his golf committee in association with GEM Golf Management, not only provided the 28 teams participating with an enjoyable day's sport and advice on improving their game from top-pro Paul McGinley, it also raised a considerable amount of money towards the cost of putting on top quality opera in Ireland.



Peter MacCann, General Manager of the Merrion Hotel and Captain of the winning team at Luttrellstown, says a few words at the prize-giving.

MARKETING OPERA Ireland TO THE MILLIONS

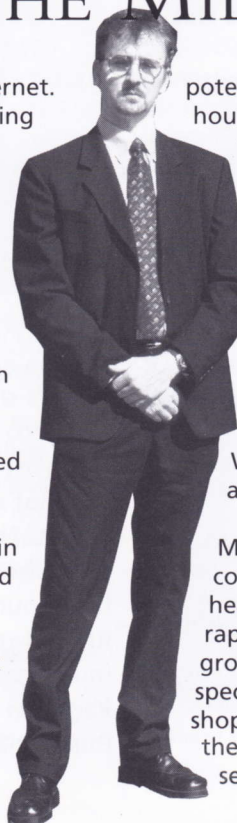
Opera Ireland is on the Internet. From this month, opera-loving surfers all over the world will be able to visit our Web-site for instant and up-to-the-minute news about what's happening in Opera Ireland, as well as instant booking facilities.

Like any other business with a commodity to sell, an opera company has to be constantly aware of the need to anticipate and fulfil the changing needs of its customers. Rapid advances in information technology, and the phenomenal growth in the use of personal computers and the Internet facility, have made it possible to target a

potential market of millions, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. And all for less than the cost of a single page advertisement in any magazine you care to mention.

So thanks to a generous sponsorship from the Dublin-based IT specialists Mediaone, Opera Ireland has taken a mega leap into this world of high-tech information technology and its very own Web site and e-mail address is almost up and running.

Mediaone, a small Web consultancy and design company headed up by Stephen Daniels, is rapidly establishing itself in the growing internet industry. It specialises in providing one-stop shops for its customers by supplying them with a range of Internet-based services.





Antonio Galie

Ebe Stignani

Bill O'Kelly

Joan Hammond

Piero Cappuccilli

Umberto Borsó

Margherita Rinaldi

ALL FOR OPERA

THE STORY OF A MUSICAL LOVE AFFAIR

over 90 people, some of whom have since died, in Ireland, Britain and Italy. He told us of the enthusiasm with which DGOS veterans provided him with reminiscences of their days in the society, replete with anecdotes of behind-the-scenes incidents, of rows and romances – legitimate and otherwise – and fond memories of happy nights of opera-making. He is particularly grateful for the goodwill and practical help he got from the families of the late Dr John Larchet, Col Jim Doyle and Lt Col Bill O'Kelly.

Love and Music is published by Atlantic Publishing. There are over 400 pages of text and nearly 40 pages of fascinating photographs. The main part of the book covers the period from the founding of the DGOS in 1941 to the start of the transition to fully professional status in the mid '80s. The story is brought up-to-date in a 5,000-word epilogue. One of the most valuable things in the book is the appendix, compiled by Opera Ireland's archivist Paddy Brennan, which lists every DGOS, DGOS Opera Ireland and Opera Ireland performance from 1941 to the present, together with casts, conductors and directors.

Opera Ireland Friends and Members can purchase Gus Smith's *Love and Music* for just £12 (inc post and packing). Details in Member's Booklet.

Gus Smith is, by his own admission, a passionate believer in opera; and the events he writes about in his latest book are ones with which he can readily empathise. *Love and Music*, a history of the Dublin Grand Opera Society, is Smith's fourth musical book, following in the wake of *Ring Up the Curtain*, *Irish Stars of the Opera* and *John Mc Cormack*.

Love and Music is a story of unquenchable passion, an on-going love affair with opera. And it is the story of the men and women involved; those singing in the chorus, or working behind the scenes, or running the organisation, and sometimes doing all three. The beginnings were contentious and there were hard knocks, and knockers, to be combated along the way. But for almost 45 years a group of dedicated and talented people toiled to ensure that Dublin got two seasons of high-quality opera every year. And in some of those years, the society was able to

take its productions to Cork and Limerick as well.

Although the chorus members were amateurs and the administration of the society was voluntary, the professional forces brought in to direct and sing at the Gaiety Theatre and on tour included names to be reckoned with in any part of the world. Wartime restrictions meant that the earliest casts were essentially home-grown. This was a period that produced the likes of May Devitt, Joseph McLoughlin (later Josef Locke) and James Johnston. After the war came Joan Hammond and other British-based artists as well as French singers from the Opéra-Comique and German stars from Hamburg. And then, in the early '50s, began the Italian invasion that would bring in a host of singers whose names are legendary in Dublin operatic lore.

Smith has spent three years researching this history, in the course of which he interviewed



James Johnston

Caterina Mancini

Attilio d'Orazi

Gianna d'Angelo

Aurio Tomicich

Virginia Zeani

"VERDI, WIT AND WHIMSY" (THE TIMES)

What the press said about Falstaff and The Tales of Hoffmann

The performance (of Falstaff) came off quite brilliantly, switching from one scene to another with ease and getting to the heart of things in a flash. OPERA NOW

Kaegi has a sharp eye and ear for the stage ... He directs Falstaff, and a refreshingly witty evening he makes of it. THE TIMES

The Gaiety itself becomes the central co-theme ... Thus it is not only Falstaff who is in decline and in need of resuscitation. THE EXAMINER

Roy Stevens was a memorable Falstaff. He did not fall into the temptation of playing his character just for laughs – there's a deeply unsavoury side to him too. IRISH NEWS

Falstaff

The men's vocal honours (went to) the richer and more rounded tones of Richard Byrne, a splendid Ford and to Jean-Luc Viala as Fenton. OPERA NOW

And the chorus was something else. The final act saw some superb singing. IRISH NEWS

The RTÉ Concert Orchestra played Verdi's magical score superbly for Antonello Allemandi. SUNDAY TRIBUNE

The women are consistently well cast. Anne Margarethe Dahl as Alice Ford, Hanna Schaer as Mistress Quickly and Kari Hamnøy as Meg Page contribute to a vivid palette of voices and character. THE TIMES

Anne Margarethe Dahl was exemplary in the unforced naturalness of her voice and in her subtle deployment of her feminine wiles, but above all in her ability to make her acting reinforce the music. IRISH TIMES

Daniella Lojarro as the sexually precocious and irrepressible Nanetta stole the show with a performance that combined gaiety and spirited energy with joyous singing. THE EXAMINER



"STRONG GALLIC FLAVOUR"

(OPERA NOW)

You will go a long way to see Hoffmann performed so seamlessly and with such beauty on all scores. **THE EXAMINER**

Where Dublin scored most heavily over London (ENO) was the strong Gallic flavour given not only by hearing the work in the French language, but by the largely Francophone cast found in the Irish capital. **OPERA NOW**

Joël Lauwers' superb direction turned Offenbach's sprawling opera into a tight-knit psychological drama. **IRISH NEWS**

Belgian producer Joël Lauwers and French designer Louis Désiré created and evening of real enchantment. **SUNDAY TRIBUNE**

Jean Pierre Furlan sang the title role with considerable dash, flair and with that essential French bite to the voice. **OPERA NOW**

Stefanescu, whose effortless top notes crowned some stunning coloratura singing. **IRISH NEWS**

Regina Nathan .. playing the prima donna as prima donna and singing like a diva. **OPERA NOW**

McCormick ... delivered everything one could have asked of her, particularly in the sumptuous barcarole. **IRISH NEWS**

Six feet seven inch Laurence Albert was stunning as Hoffmann's multi-disguised nemesis. **THE EXAMINER**

Marianne Rørholm plays Hoffmann's shadow Nicklausse with the kind of sexy assurance rarely seen in opera in this country. **THE EXAMINER**

Good pacing and lead are offered by Claude Schnitzler's conducting, by the RTÉ Concert Orchestra's playing, and by fresh-toned singing from Opera Ireland's chorus. Thus there is a strong contest for a good line-up of principals. **IRISH TIMES**

Lauwers' direction was slick and animated and ... was matched by the pointed, energetic conducting of Claude Schnitzler, who certainly brought out the best in the RTÉ Concert Orchestra and the excellent Opera Ireland Chorus. **OPERA NOW**

Tales of Hoffmann

OPERA

AT HOME

JOHN ALLEN
has been
listening to a
selection of
opera
recordings
on CD.

Starting with Italian opera and, as ever, those inveterate bel-cantoists Rossini, Bellini and Donizetti are to the fore. The famous La Scala 1960 live recording of Donizetti's *Poliuto* has been made available by EMI Classics (2 CDs CMS5 65448-2) in its Classics collection. Paolina was Callas's last new role at La Scala and her voice was beginning to show signs of wear. But Callas is Callas and there is still enough artistry to carry off the relatively undemanding part. But it is the sterling qualities of Franco Corelli in the title role and Ettore



Bastianini as the pro-consul that steal the honours here. Moving to Donizetti in lighter mode, the bucolic goings-on in *L'elisir d'amore* offer ideal opportunities to the lyrico-dramatic gifts of husband and wife team Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu. Using a slightly later edition of the opera than usual, Evelino Pidò leads this brisk Opéra de Lyon performance (Decca: 2 CDs 455 691-2) with an



adroitness that evokes frequent chuckles of satisfaction from at least one listener.

SLEEP-WALKING AND FLIRTING WITH STRANGERS

The less boisterous ambience of Bellini's rustic opera *La sonnambula* is beautifully caught by Alberto Zedda and his cast in the Naxos live-recording from Amsterdam (2 CDs 8.660042-43). This outstanding, and absolutely complete, recording of the work is enhanced throughout by the



eloquent bel-canto singing of the two protagonists, Luba Orgonasova and Raúl Giménez. There are very good Aminos on other recordings too, of course, but nobody elsewhere can match the elegance of the Argentine tenor as heard on this budget-price recording. Rossini's *Il turco in Italia* offers more subtleties than his better-known comedies, and in Decca's recording (2 CDs 458 924-2) these are skilfully exploited by Ricardo Chailly and his cast. Cecilia Bartoli fairly bubbles as the flirtatious Fiorilla and she is abetted by bass Michele Pertusi's nimble negotiation of Rossini's usual accomplished buffo singing and acting as her long-suffering



husband. And the many intricate ensembles are delivered with great sparkle.

A PLACID EMPEROR AND A FAT KNIGHT

Two relatively unknown operas, one from each end of the 18th century, have appeared on the Chandos label. Vivaldi's *Ottone in villa*, which dates from 1713, was his first ever stage work. Richard Hickok and his Collegium Musicum 90 forces give the expressive if somewhat static piece as much life as they possibly can on CHAN 0614(2), and there are quite sensuous vocal contributions in the title role. Antonio Salieri's 1799 version of *Falstaff* is never going to upstage either Verdi's or Nicolai's musicalisation of Shakespeare's fat knight. But, as heard on CHAN 9613(2), it is a pretty entertaining work and it's given a vivacious reading by a mainly Italian cast, led by baritone Romano Franceschetto as Falstaff and the Korean-Italian soprano Lee Myeounghee, under



Alberto Veronesi. from Susan Gritton, Nancy Argenta, Susan Daneman and, especially, Monica Groop

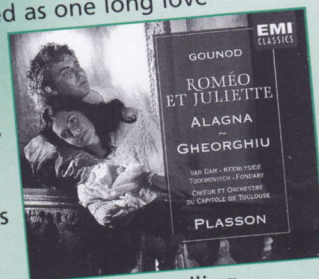
TENORS PAST AND PRESENT

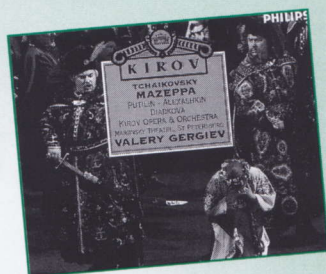
Verdi wasn't very well represented in my listening, apart from a rather good recital of arias by Roberto Alagna on EMI (CDC5 56567-2). Of course, he wouldn't be able for most of the roles represented here in actual performance – and I hope he isn't going to try – but it is refreshing to hear things like "Celeste Aida" and "O tu che in seno agli angeli" sung by a lyric tenor. Moving on to the verismo period, I am delighted to welcome back what collectors have always referred to as the 'Björling' *Pagliacci* (EMI 1CD CDH5 66778-2) which was recorded back in 1953. But while it is true that the great Swedish tenor dominates with his stylish delivery of what lesser mortals on other recordings have often turned into loutish bawling, credit is also due to the splendid contributions of Victoria de los Angeles and that remarkable pair of American baritones Leonard Warren and Robert Merrill.



CANOODLING MARATHON

Charles Gounod's *Roméo et Juliette* has been described as one long love duet with several interruptions. In fact there are four major duets for the leading pair, involving some 40 minutes of singing; and who better to indulge in this marathon canoodling session than the world's favourite operatic couple of the moment, Roberto Alagna and Angela Gheorghiu. Seriously, the EMI Classics recording (3 CDs CDS5 56123) is a terrific, and absolutely complete, performance of a wonderful yet rarely-performed opera (Wexford had it in 1967 but it hasn't been done in Dublin since 1945). The Alagnas are entirely credible as the





RUSSIAN RARITIES

Opera doesn't loom large in most peoples' perception of what Sergei Rachmaninov did best. But listening to any of the trio of one-acters on Deutsche Grammophon's 3CD set 453 452-2 dispels all doubts as to his dramatic awareness, whether in the early *Aleko* of 1893 or the more mature and Wagner-influenced *Miserly Knight* and *Francesca da Rimini* written in 1906. DG has assembled a mouth-watering cast which does full justice to the works. Included are soprano Maria

Guleghina, mezzo Anne Sophie von Otter, tenors Sergei Larin and Ilya Levinsky, baritone Sergei

Leiferkus and bass Sergei Aleksashkin. The Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra and Opera Chorus are strongly directed by Neeme Järvi. Larin and Aleksashkin can also be heard in two splendid recitals of Russian arias on Chandos CHAN 9603 and CHAN 9629 respectively. Although Tchaikovsky's *Mazeppa* isn't exactly a rarity, except in this part of the world, it's good to have Valery Gergiev's rip-roaring live Kirov performance on Philips 462 206. Baritone Nikolai Putilin as the tyrannical Mazeppa and soprano Irina Loskutova as a moving Maria head a fine Russian cast in which Sergei Alexashkin, again, contributes a strong portrayal of the ill-used Kochubey.

THROUGH THE MEDIUM

Those who heard their first operas sung in the vernacular back in the earlier years of the DGOS will be aware of Chandos's on-going series of opera-in-English. Dennis O'Neill, one of Opera Ireland's Artistic Patrons, heads the casts in the latest three: single disc issues of *Cavalleria rusticana* (CHAN 3004) and *Pagliacci* (CHAN 3003) and a splendid 2CD set of *La Bohème* (CHAN 3008 [2]). The Welsh tenor

has all the necessary vocal heft for the two verismo roles, albeit with more than a suspicion of a beat under pressure, while his soft singing enhances the poetic image of Puccini's Rodolfo. He is well partnered by American soprano Cynthia Haymon's ardent Mimi and a cast of distinguished British artists. The exciting Romanian-born Nelly Miricioiu is a full-blooded if verbally vague Santuzza; and Rosa Mannion, after a laboured ballatella, blossoms into a committed Nedda. Alan Opie is a fine Marcello and an outstanding Tonio, who rightly gets to speak the final line "Our comedy is over". Conductor David Parry paces the *Bohème* splendidly but he lingers too much over parts of the Mascagni and Leoncavallo scores.

John Allen will be discussing recordings of Beethoven's *Leonore* (the original *Fidelio*) and the first version of Richard Strauss's *Ariadne auf Naxos* as well as re-issues of important historical performances, including Richard Crooks as Faust and Lawrence Tibbett as the four villains in *Hoffmann*, in his OPERA FOR CHRISTMAS lecture in December. He will consider three recorded cycles of Wagner's *Der Ring des Nibelungen* in SQUARING UP TO WAGNER'S RING in February. See IRISH OPERA DIARY for dates and venue.

ill-starred youngsters and there is a good supporting cast that includes Simon Keenlyside as Mercutio and José van Dam as the benign Frère Laurent. The Toulouse-made recording is lovingly directed by Michel Plasson.

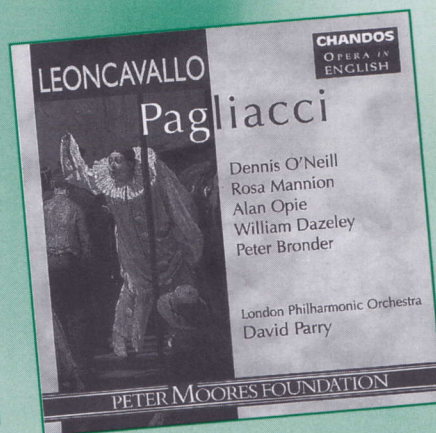
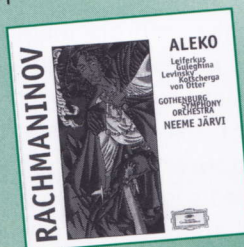
NORTH STAR IN THE SOUTH EAST

Giacomo Meyerbeer makes a rare appearance on record in the Marco Polo 3CD set of his semi-comic

L'étoile du nord (8.223829-31) recorded at the 1996 Wexford Festival. This is Meyerbeer shorn of pomp, if not of length. The sound is somewhat recessed, but the set is still worth hearing because of the high quality of so much of the performance. I particularly liked the spirited singing of Elizabeth Futral (Opera Ireland's *Lakmé* in 1993) and the young Peruvian tenor Juan Diego Flórez as well as the choral singing—there is plenty of it—and the playing of the NSO under the enthusiastic direction of the brilliant young Russian conductor Wladimir Jurowski.

FASSBÄNDER'S CHARLOTTE

Orfeo has just issued a live version, in very good sound, of Massenet's *Werther* on (C 464 972 1) recorded at the work's Munich premiere in December 1971. Plácido Domingo, a master of legato if a mite thick-toned on the highest notes, is a passionate hero; and he is matched by Brigitte Fassbänder, no less, as an insightful Charlotte whose searing 'letter scene' alone is worth the price of the two CDs. Jesus Lopez-Cobos conducts his Bavarian forces with a happy mix of sensitivity and thrust.



THE KIROV OPERA IN NEW YORK

Pat O'Kelly reports on a rare operatic experience

Where would one have seen four fairly unfamiliar Russian operas (*Ruslan and Lyudmila*, *Prince Igor*, *Mazeppa* and *Betrothal in a Monastery*) in three days? Well, the answer was New York in May of this year during the visit of the Kirov Opera to the Metropolitan Opera House when its own 1997/98 season had come to an end. I felt the opportunity was too good to miss and with four friends set out across the Atlantic. We had, by the way, booked our tickets some months in advance in person at the Met Box Office, splitting ourselves between the balcony (\$39) and Dress Circle (\$71).

The Kirov's history dates back over a little more than two-and-a-half centuries. Celebrating the coronation of Empress Anna Joannovna in 1730, August II of Saxony sent an Italian opera troupe to St Petersburg. The young Empress, a niece of Peter the Great, was so delighted that she ordered a troupe of her own. Among the many composers of the Neapolitan School who lived and worked at various times in St Petersburg were Manfredini, Paisiello (of the other Barber of Seville fame), Galuppi and Cimarosa so a certain penchant for the Italian repertory continued for the next century. It should be remembered too that Verdi's *La forza del destino* was written for St Petersburg's Imperial Theatre in 1862.

But to return to the Empress Anna's day. In 1736 a group of Russian singers performed a Russian language version of *Cephalus and Procris* by Francisco Araia (1709 - 1770), a Neapolitan then resident at the Russian Court. By the 1870s there were two opera houses in St Petersburg, one in the Hermitage of the Winter Palace; the other at the Bolshoi Theatre where generally French and Italian works were

presented quite soon after their western premieres.

After 1812 things underwent a change with performances being given in German and Russian although the repertoire was still largely French and Italian. The first important Russian opera was Glinka's *A Life for the Tsar*, premiered in 1836 on the occasion of the Bolshoi's reopening after extensive refurbishment. A Russian group played there until 1843 when Nicholas I ousted it by inviting the tenor Giovanni Battista Rubini to assemble an Italian company. This reigned supreme throughout the 1840s and 1850s, partly because it escaped the censorship which oppressed the vernacular theatre.

With the Russian company displaced at the Bolshoi it appeared at irregular intervals at the Circus Theatre until these premises burned down in 1859. Almost immediately a new theatre was built, designed by the court architect Alberto Cavo who had just finished work on rebuilding the Bolshoi in Moscow. The new St Petersburg theatre opened in 1860. Named the Mariinsky (or Mary Theatre) after the Empress Marie of Hesse, wife of Tsar Alexander II, it gave the Russian company a new home.

The 1870s witnessed a rise in Russian nationalism, spurred on by the Balkan campaign against the Ottoman Turks (Tchaikovsky's *Marche Slav* was written for a special concert to 'equip Russian volunteers and to succour victims of the war'), and an indigenous repertory came into being. Mussorgsky's *Boris Godonov* was produced for the first time at the Mariinsky in 1874 and by 1880 Tchaikovsky and Rimsky-Korsakov had laid the foundations of an enduring company. The Italian Opera was dissolved in 1885 and

the St Petersburg Bolshoi demolished leaving the Mariinsky as the Imperial Theatre.

Thanks to the Czech-born Eduard Naprovnik, who was principal conductor from 1869 to 1914, the standard of the Mariinsky rose steadily with an array of fine singers which included Fyodor Stravinsky (Igor's father) and Fyodor Chaliapin. During Naprovnik's reign he had charge of some three dozen opera premieres by Dargomizhsky, Serov, Cui, Tchaikovsky, Rimsky-Korsakov, Mussorgsky and Rubinstein as well as a number of his own. Interestingly Naprovnik was followed by the English conductor Albert Coates who remained until 1917. But the Mariinsky was the most prestigious opera and ballet theatre in the Russian empire.

The Bolshevik revolution brought changes to the Mariinsky administration which until then had been the provenance of the Tsar who paid all the theatre's bills and had the last word on repertoire and performers. One of the first casualties of the political upheaval was the planned production of Prokofiev's *The Gambler*.

Just fourteen days after the revolution a decree was issued transferring control of the Mariinsky to the 'People's Commissariat on Enlightenment'. The theatre's name was altered in 1919 to the Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet with the word 'State' added the following year. In December 1934 the Leningrad party boss, Sergei Mironovich Kirov, who was next to Stalin in seniority, was assassinated and his name was then incorporated into the theatre's title. Ironically Kirov was replaced by the infamous Andrei Zhdanov, Stalin's leading cultural advisor and the architect of the notorious 1940s'

campaign against Soviet artists, composers and intellectuals.

The first musical director of the Kirov was Boris Khalkin and among many other things it was he who conducted the first performance of Prokofiev's *Betrothal in a Monastery*. He remained at the helm until 1954. During the 1977 - 1988 period Yuri Temirkanov, one of Russia's most internationally renowned conductors, acted as artistic director and principal conductor and from time to time also produced a number of the operas. In 1988 Temirkanov, then just fifty, resigned and was replaced by the even more youthful Valery Gergiev. Following his 1978 Kirov debut, with Prokofiev's *War and Peace*, he was appointed Temirkanov's assistant. Gergiev has just become principal guest conductor at the Met and he

vibrancy of their colour in both costume and design. The *Ruslan* (with some marvellously vaulted ceilings in Act I), *Mazeppa* and *Betrothal* were current (1994 and 1996) St Petersburg productions while the *Igor* was mounted specially with the New York visit in mind. Despite their recent vintage the sets, with the exception of the Borodin, were in what might be termed, a 'traditional' mould and refreshingly devoid of 'symboli' modernism. The *Igor* attempted a stylised approach which was convincingly successful in the Polovtsian act where a number of extremely tall cylindrical 'peppercanister' tents of gauze-like material left 'eastern promise' open to one's own speculation. Costumes had a pliantly thin-metallic-sheet quality which helped the dancers to be startlingly flexible in their nimbleness.



A scene from the Kirov's *Ruslan and Lyudmila*

conducted three of the Kirov's operas (by Tchaikovsky, Borodin and Prokofiev) in New York.

The name Kirov remained in vogue until 1991 when further political upheaval led to the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States. The Kirov administration decided the time was ripe to revert to the old name of Mariinsky and the Theatre now enjoys the revitalisation of that identity once again. However, to avoid confusion when touring it was decided to leave the name 'Kirov' intact.

One of the most striking things about the Kirov's New York presentations was the unusual

absolutely glittering in the brightness of its Seville location, had a large multi-functional crescent back-drop design which at times fell forward to reveal various vistas and to become an inclining stage floor.

Musically, in *Mazeppa*, *Igor* and *Betrothal*, Gergiev achieved a dramatic potency with the strength of the Kirov's orchestral support (weighty but never heavy ; delicately appropriate ; powerfully pertinent when need be and magnificently vital overall) particularly impressive. The *Igor* was given in a new edition of the score by Yuri Falik, a professor at the St Petersburg conservatory.

This brought a change to the usual ending with just Igor and Yaroslavna merging into the ranks of the large a capella chorus. While the idea was effective in itself, for me it was an anti-climax to an otherwise excellent achievement. The *Ruslan* came under the baton of Alexander Titov, a conductor of considerable experience and who revealed the extraordinary bel canto nature of so much of Glinka's captivating score.

As might be expected it was the baritones and basses who dominated the vocal side of events. Among them Nikolai Putilin (title role in both *Mazeppa* and *Igor*) Vladimir Vaneev (Kochubey in *Mazeppa*), Mikhail Kit (Svetozar in *Ruslan*) and Sergei Aleksashkin (Mendoza in *Betrothal*) offered emphatic vocal resource. That being said, the mezzo and alto line up was also impressive. Zlata Bulycheca in the breeches role of Ratmir in *Ruslan*, Irina Bogachova as Naina in *Ruslan*, Larissa Diadkova as Lyubov in *Mazeppa* and the marvellous Olga Markova-Mikhailenko as the Duenna in *Betrothal* were all superbly solid.

On the soprano roll call Galina Gorchakova was a stunning Yaroslavna in *Igor*, Olga Guryakova was the suitably tender Maria in *Mazeppa* - her final mad scene notably expressive and moving - with Anna Netrebko the fetchingly lithe Lyudmila. The tenors included the distinctive Constantine Pluzhnikov (the harassed Don Jerome in *Betrothal*) and Yuri Mazurin (Vladimir Igorevich in *Igor*). The Kirov's choral forces were all that one might imagine a Russian chorus should be. Certainly for five intrepid Irish followers this Kirov outing was extremely worthwhile despite the inclement New York spring weather forcing me to purchase a \$5 umbrella from an enterprising and entertaining Senegalese outside my hotel.

It is twelve years since Puccini's last, and some say greatest, opera *Turandot* was seen in Dublin; but this October the Latvian National Opera is touring its production to Cork and Limerick. And, thanks to a special package on offer from University Concert Hall, Opera Ireland members and their friends can catch one of the Limerick performances, on either Tuesday 6 or Wednesday 7 October.

Turandot

IN LIMERICK

The package includes: opera ticket; return Iarnrod Eireannn train journey (depart Connolly Station 14.35 hrs on Tuesday or Wednesday); post opera supper

in LaVazza Restaurant; overnight accommodation and breakfast at 4-star Castletroy Hotel; lunch; museum visits; and coach transfers between all venues.

The all-in cost is £125

per person sharing and bookings can be made through the UCHL box office at (061) 331549/314313 (credit cards accepted without booking fee).

Co-Opera takes to the road

A new touring opera company gets its first season underway on Friday 25 September with the opening night of Verdi's *La Traviata* at the Backstage Theatre in Longford. Co-Opera is the brainchild of director Michael Hunt who, as it happens, directed the same piece for Opera Ireland with Karen Huffstodt and Patrick Power nine years ago. The cast in his new production will be headed by the exciting young Irish soprano Máire O'Brien in the title role and she will have the young Swedish tenor Bjorn Arvidsson as her Alfredo. Germont will be sung by Máire's famous father Frank O'Brien and tenor Anthony Norton will also be in the cast. We caught up with Michael Hunt as preparations for the new venture were well in progress.

Why have you decided to set up this new opera company?

The initial idea came up when I was discussing opera at a theatre meeting at the Hawks Well in Sligo about 18 months ago. I became aware of a desire for more opera in regional areas and of a willingness by a number of venues to programme them into their schedules. OTC has created a ready audience for its excellent productions, but some of the theatre managers want to supplement these with productions of mainstream works like *Carmen* and *La Bohème* and suchlike. So I visited as many theatres as I could around the country and received a great deal

of support from everyone I spoke to, including the Arts Council, who asked me to submit a fully worked out plan for consideration. Michael Diskin of the Town Hall Theatre in Galway is one of the most enthusiastic supporters of the project, and he suggested that we mount a production as a test case and he approached a number of other 'partnership' venues and persuaded them to guarantee enough money to enable us to book the first tour.

Why did you pick *La Traviata* as your first production?

Because I have always thought that it would take well to the sort of chamber approach we are using to suit the venues we will be visiting. The music is popular, the cast is small, and I know that the atmosphere of 19th century Paris can be created effectively. Also, the instrumental ensemble can be on stage and become an integral part of the performance as well as contributing to the liveliness of the stage picture.

How have you gone about finding a production team?

For this first of what I hope will be many productions, I have gone for a mix of people with Irish touring experience and those who are used to working with me. Project Manager Marie Breen belongs in the first group and, by calling in a few favours, I have persuaded the young German designer Birte Meyer, whose list of theatre credits at home and in Vienna is

impressive, to do the sets; and John Bright is designing the costumes. John's achievements in the cinema includes an Oscar for *A Room with a View*, one of my favourite films, and nominations for *Howard's End* and *Remains of the Day*. His costumes are always rich in period detail and that is just what I wanted for this *La Traviata*. The opera will be lit by Paul Keogan, one of the most experienced lighting designers in Ireland, and our musical director, recommended to me by Opera Ireland, is Andrew Synott, whose reduction of Mozart's *Magic Flute* for OTC I admired.

What of the future?

It is a little early to say, but I would like to think Co-Opera will be able to do two tours a year and also work with companies like Opera Ireland in helping them to develop their audiences and share the excitement of their work with the regional theatres. The audiences are out there and we have plenty of ideas. I hope that we will continue to listen to the people in our 'partnership' venues and work with them to share the joy of opera. As long as there are artistic directors like Michael Diskin in Galway and Jane Hughes in Longford asking for more work, we will try to respond. In the long term, I hope that the Arts Council will be able to continue supporting the project financially. They have already been most supportive in offering advice and listening to our plans.

IRISH OPERA DIARY

Autumn/Winter 1998/99

Information as available at end of August 1998

Opera Theatre Company

Booking (01) 679 4962
CINDERELLA, a new opera for children by Peter Maxwell Davies. All but one of the principal parts will be taken by children. The production will feature 25 members of RTÉ's Cór na nÓg together with Camerata Ireland and an orchestra of talented young musicians; directed by James Conway; choreographed by Caiman Collins; designed by Katherine Sankey.
Dublin, St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, 3 performances Sep 5 & 6.
Gorey, Theatre Hall, Sep 9
Kilkenny, Watergate Theatre, Sep 12 & 13
New Ross, St Michael's Theatre, Sep 16
Longford, Backstage Theatre, Sep 19 & 20
Cavan, Town Hall, Sep 23
Westport, Sacred Heart Convent, Sep 26 & 27
Drogheda, Droichead Arts Centre, Sep 30
Ballinteer, Amharclann an Naithi, Oct 2
Ballyshannon, Abbey Centre, Oct 4
Enniskillen, Ardhowen Theatre, Oct 7
Limerick, Belltable Arts Centre, Oct 10 & 11

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
September 7, 8 pm: THE BARD ON SONG, Opera's treatment of Shakespeare

Opera Northern Ireland

Belfast, Grand Opera House
Booking (081232) 241919
Sept. 19, 22, 24 & 26, 7.30 pm
THE MAGIC FLUTE (Mozart) in English
c. Martin André, p. Stephen Landridge; d. Conor Murphy.

Co-Opera

Booking at venues
LA TRAVIATA (Verdi)
Máire O'Brien, Björn Arvidsson, Anthony Norton, Frank O'Brien: c. Andrew Synnott; p. Michael Hunt; d. Birte Meyer (set), John Bright (Costumes).
Longford, Backstage Theatre, Sep 25
Cork, Opera House, Sep 27 & 28
Waterford, Theatre Royal, Sep 30
Kilkenny, Watergate Theatre, Oct 2
Tralee, Siamsa Tíre, Oct 4
Sligo, Hawk's Well, Oct 6
Galway, Town Hall Theatre, Oct 8, 9 & 10

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
October 5, 8 pm: THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT, The supernatural in opera

Latvian National Opera

University Concert Hall, Limerick
Box Office: (061) 331549
October 6 & 7, 8pm.
TURANDOT (Puccini)

Wexford Festival Opera

Wexford, Theatre Royal
Booking (053) 22144;
Fax (053) 47438
October 15, 18, 21, 24, 27 & 30, 8 pm.
FOSCA (Gomes)
Elmira Magomedova, Giuseppina Piunti, Anatoly Lochak, Juri Alexeev, Tigran Martirosian, Alessandro Guerzoni; c. Alexander Anissimov; p/d. Giovanni Panzavolta.
October 16, 19, 22, 25, 28 & 31, 8 pm.
SARLATÀN (Haas)
Luca Grassi, Katia Trebeleva, Ludovit Ludha, Stanislaw Schwets, Peter Wedd, Simon Wielding, Frantisek Zahradnicek, Julian Jensen, Louise Walsh, Leigh Melrose, Alberto Janelli, David Marsh, Julian Tovey; c. Israel Yinon; p. John Abulafia; d. Fotini Dimou.
October 17, 20, 23, 26, 29 & November 1, 8 pm.
I CAVALIERI DI EKEBÙ (Zandonai)
Dario Volonté, Francesca Franci, Victor Chernomortzev, Alida Barbasini, Maxim Mikhailov, Joseph Calleja, David Marsh, Tea Demurishvili, Louise Victoria Nava; c. Daniele Callegari; p. Gabriele Vacis; d. Francesco Calagnini (sets), Steve Almerighi (costumes).
OPERA SCENES
White's Barn, White's Hotel (mornings and afternoons, starting times vary)
October 16, 19, 22, 25, 28 & November 1
DIE FLEDERMAUS (Strauss)
October 17, 20, 23, 26, & 30
CARMEN (Bizet)
October 18, 21, 24, 27 & 31
LA FANCIULLA DEL WEST (Puccini)

Lyric Opera

Dublin, National Concert Hall
Booking 475 1572;
Fax: 475 1507
October 31, 7.30 pm.
MADAMA BUTTERFLY (Puccini)
Semi-staged performance; c. Fergus Sheil; p. Vivian Coates.

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
November 9, 8 pm: BAT AND BALL AND LUST AND ALL, Previews of *Die Fledermaus*, *Cavalleria rusticana* and *Pagliacci*

Opera South

Cork Opera House
Booking (021) 270022
November 17, 19, 21 & 23, 8 pm
IL TROVATORE (Verdi)
Cast includes Tracy Saliefendic, Keith Latham, John Rath; c. Robert Dean; p. Olivia Fuchs; d. Sarah Ashpole.

Opera Ireland

Dublin, Gaiety Theatre
Booking (01) 677 1717
November 20, 22, 24, 26 & 28, 7.30 pm.
DIE FLEDERMAUS (Strauss)
Janis Kelly, Louise Walsh, Joyce Campana, Michael Kristenson, James Nelson, John Hancock, Gerard O'Connor; c. David Heusel; p. Kurt Palm; d. Ursula Hübner (sets), Renato Uz (costumes).
November 21, 23, 25, 27 & 29, 7.30 pm
CAVALLERIA RUSTICANA (Mascagni)
Sylvie Brunet, Joyce Campana, Deirdre Cooling Nolan, Ivan Choupenitch, Anatoly Lochak; c. Alexander Anissimov; p. Dieter Kaegi; d. Bruno Schwengl.
PAGLIACCI (Leoncavallo)
Daniella Lojarro, Patrick Power, Declan Kelly, Jonathan Viera, Martin Higgins; c. Alexander Anissimov; p. Dieter Kaegi; d. Bruno Schwengl.

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
December 7, 8 pm: OPERA FOR CHRISTMAS, a review of recent opera CDs suitable for giving, and getting, as Christmas presents

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
January 4, 8 pm: OPERA GOES TO SEA, Operas with a nautical theme

Opera Theatre Company

Booking (01) 679 4962
February (dates to be announced)
THE RAKE'S PROGRESS (Stravinsky)

Cast to be announced; RTÉCO Production will tour to Dublin, Cork, Galway, Wexford, Waterford, Dundalk, Athlone, Limerick and Derry or Enniskillen

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
February 4, 8 pm: SQUARING UP TO WAGNER'S RING, A beginner's guide to *Der Ring des Nibelungen*

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
March 1, 8 pm: UNDER THE INFLUENCE, Topping in opera, and some of its consequences

Opera Ireland Lecture

Dublin, Mercer Hotel
March 28, 8 pm: LADIES WILDE AND FRAIL, Previews of Strauss's *Salome* and Verdi's *La Traviata*

Opera Ireland

Dublin, Gaiety Theatre
Booking (01) 677 1717
April 10, 12, 14, 16 & 18, 7.30 pm
LA TRAVIATA (Verdi)
Regina Nathan, Jean-Pierre Furlan, Guido Paëvatalu; c. Jérôme Pillmann; p. Stephan Groegler; d. Veronique Seyman
SALOME (Strauss)
April 11, 13, 15 & 17, 7.30 pm
Karen Notare, Julia Juon, Marianne Rørholm, Volker Vogel, Frodo Olsen; Laurent Wagner, p. Joël Lauwers; d. Louis Désiré.

Opera Ireland Lectures 1998/99

The Mercer Hotel, which is just around the corner from the Gaiety Theatre, at the junction of Mercer Street and York Street, is again the venue for John Allen's illustrated opera lectures. The series opens on Monday 7 September with "The Bard on Song", a look at some of the operas based on Shakespeare's dramas. All of the lectures will take place on Monday evenings at 8 pm. Admission is free to Friends and Members.

OPERA IRELAND NEWS

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SUZANNE ALL OVER

Plaudits for a peripatetic Irish diva

Suzanne Murphy is a busy woman right now. During the last twelve months the Limerick-born soprano has been enthralled audiences on three different continents.

Last November, following her success in the role in Cardiff, she sang Leonore in six performances of Beethoven's *Fidelio* at the Sao Paulo Opera House in Brazil, the first Irish opera singer ever to perform there. Back on this side of the Atlantic, she spent February and March touring in Welsh National Opera's new production of *Tosca*.

In April, May and June she was in the USA where she made her debut at the American Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina, as the Kostelnicka in Janáček's *Jenufa*. Her performance of this demanding role won her acclaim from festival audiences and from the American press. The New York Times said on 26 May: "Suzanne Murphy (Kostelnicka) offers an unusual and very convincing portrait of a woman still in her prime, with a potential sensuousness that cannot be expressed in action but

only in the dominating allure of her singing." On June 1 the Wall Street Journal said: Suzanne Murphy was an unusually complex and interesting Kostelnicka." Actors from Dublin's Gate Theatre, who were at the festival playing *Lady Windermere's Fan*, were reportedly

moved by Suzanne's gripping performance when they attended her last performance. She will be repeating her Kostelnicka in WNO's tour of *Jenufa* this autumn. Like the Spoleto performances, this production will be sung in Czech..



In between these intercontinental engagements, Suzanne carried on her usual concert and recital programme, which included the annual New year's Eve spectacular at the University Concert Hall in her native Limerick.

Opera Ireland patrons are very proud of Suzanne Murphy's continuing international successes. They still have happy memories of her two appearances with the company; she sang Violetta in *La traviata* at the Gaiety in 1983 and in 1989 we heard her famous interpretation of Bellini's *Norma* in an impressive production mounted for her at the National Concert Hall. She is, of course, one of the our four Artistic Patrons and we very much hope that she will appear again with the company in the not too distant future.

BAND OF GOLD

This year marks the Golden Jubilee of the Radio Telefís Éireann Concert Orchestra. The RTÉCO, which has been playing for Opera Ireland's productions at the Gaiety Theatre for the last six years, started life in 1948 as the Radio Éireann Light

Opera and gained its earliest opera experience during the first years of the Wexford Festival. Since that time the orchestra has grown in size and become one of the most versatile musical ensembles in action today. Aside from operatic

and normal concert work, the RTÉCO's assignments range from playing in the 'pit' for ballet companies to the stars in the Eurovision Song Contest, taking in pop spectaculars, CD recordings and foreign tours on the way.

